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Listening as a Sanctuary from Human Annihilation: *Trojan Women* and the Global Humanitarian Crisis

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Listening as a Sanctuary from Human Annihilation: *Trojan Women* and the Global Humanitarian Crisis

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The scope of this research is to spark conversation among members of receiving communities concerning their attitudes toward displaced populations by using Euripides' *Trojan Women* as a facilitator. By many outside the Classics profession, the study of antiquity is often perceived as a discipline disconnected from current issues; however, remembering and examining the past can greatly shape the present. Ancient Greek theater is perhaps the genre that best lends itself to be scrutinized today for social purposes. In fact, it promoted introspection among the body of Athenian citizens by highlighting inequalities and imbalances in power structures between opposing parties. This study suggests that tragedies can still fulfill the same function. In particular, this essay focuses on *Trojan Women,* with the intent to unearth group dynamics between the Greek aggressors and the Trojan slaves, and to apply its lessons to recent humanitarian emergencies. Philological work shows that the Greeks in the play attempt to dehumanize their captives through practices of legal violence, objectification, and silencing. Nevertheless, the women find sanctuary from human annihilation through their ability to speak and to be heard. Dominant classes today employ similar techniques to disempower incoming societies and to deprive them of their political voice. Thanks to tragedy's ability to create a distancing effect through mythological narratives, public readings of *Trojan Women* might enable members of hosting countries to engage more readily in discussions concerning the theme of displacement that address their own biases. Therefore, this thesis argues that the analysis and reception of *Trojan Women* can elucidate the worldwide crisis in welcoming those seeking shelter and help groups asked to receive displaced populations make more compassionate and informed decisions.

Keywords: Euripides, Hecuba, displacement, refugees, subjectivity, lament, legal violence, objectification, silence, speech, listening.

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Introduction

"My country, my children, and my husband are gone…I lie here wretched with my limbs miserably reclined and my back stretched on a hard bed…Yet move forward to the ships."[1]

—Euripides, *Trojan Women*

"They tied me and assaulted [me]…They left and stole all of our things…I decided to run away. As we were walking, our son died on the road. We were crying, but we had to leave him there…We slept on rocks and sand; we didn't have blankets…We arrived at the ocean at night time…We were told we had to get on a boat."[2]

—Gioia

According to the most recent 2018 UNHCR report around 75 million people are displaced from their homes because of wars, poverty, political persecutions, and a plethora of other reasons.[3] This is not a new phenomenon, however. Greek and Roman literature presents countless examples of people looking for sanctuary. The quotes reported above are separated by more than 2,000 years, but they are virtually interchangeable and recount similar experiences. The speaker of the first quote is Hecuba, queen of Troy, as depicted in Euripides' play *Trojan Women*, while the speaker of the second one is Gioia, a refugee from Ivory Coast.[4] It is reported that George Santayana said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."[5] Given that historical patterns keep repeating themselves as demonstrated by the remarkable affinity of the opening citations, Santayana's

[1] Eur. *Tro*. 107, 112-14, 1332. Except where indicated, all translations are my own. For the Greek text I am relying on the David Kovacs' Loeb edition.
[2] As noted by the ellipses, the selected passages are part of a longer interview with Gioia held on October 30th 2018. For privacy purposes, I have substituted her real name with a pseudonym. In 2011, due to civil unrest, Gioia and part of her family were forced to leave Ivory Coast, their native land. In the ensuing years they travelled through Ghana, Togo, Algeria, Libya, and eventually reached the shores of Italy.
[3] United Nations, "The Global Report," UNHCR, accessed March 29, 2020, https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/the-global-report.
[4] The term refugee is by no means employed in a derogatory way. It is used according to the definition provided by UNHCR: "A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence." United Nations, "What Is a Refugee?", USA for UNHCR, accessed March 29, 2020, https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee. The principles outlined in this paper are applicable to immigrants (and minorities in general), since, as FitzGerald and Arar point out, the definitions of refugees and immigrants have blurred boundaries. "The Sociology of Refugee Migration," *Annual Review of Sociology* 44, no. 1 (2018): 389-90.
[5] George Santayana, *The Life of Reason* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1905), 284.

observation should be taken more deeply to heart. Although the act of remembering is necessary to implement change, it is not enough. It must be accompanied by scrutiny and critical thinking. In fact, according to Freud, behavioral change will occur only after remembering and analyzing an experience, or, as he would call it, after "working-through."[6] This principle not only applies to individuals, but to societies in their entirety. Throughout the centuries, colonizers, victors, and dominant classes have disempowered the populations they subjugated, especially in countries of the Global South,[7] and deprived them of their political voice. Cultural imperialism and capitalistic policies have over time caused impoverishment, strained internal and international relationships, and population displacement, and unfortunately, these same forces continue to carry on this disruptive work today. These longstanding practices have seeped deep into the layers of society and have made countries of the Global North complicit at a structural level. In the *Apology*, Socrates claims that "the unexamined life is not worth living for man;"[8] by extension, societies at large share the responsibility to examine their histories.

For Athens, one might claim, theatre represented a vehicle to embrace the Socratic imperative. The *mise-en-scène* of tragedies as a social event represented a way to bring the community together and to investigate polarizing questions, questions without clear answers. The theatrical performances at the City Dionysia were an occasion to allow citizens to see issues under different perspectives, and allow the human soul to experience fear and pity, and develop self-awareness.[9] Simon Goldhill articulates this notion: "Greek tragedy is a remarkable genre of public literature because it questions,

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[6] Guy M. Thompson, and Stanley A. Leavy, "Working-Through ("Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through," 1914)," in *The Truth About Freud's Technique: The Encounter with the Real*, (New York; London: New York University Press, 1994), 197-98.
[7] The distinction between Global North and Global South is based on socio-economic observations. The Global North includes rich countries such as the United States, Canada, the European Union, and Australia (currently considered receiving societies), while the Global South consists of countries with low incomes; the vast majority of displaced people comes from the Global South. See David FitzGerald, *Refuge Beyond Reach: How Rich Democracies Repel Asylum Seekers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 267-68.
[8] Pl. *Apol*. 38a 5-6.
[9] Arist. *Poet.* 1449b.

challenges, destabilizes the public discourse of the state. It asks hard questions, but very rarely indeed provides anything that looks like an answer…tragedy does not like to have a character with whom the audience simply associates and through whose eyes the play is viewed."[10] Compassion and willingness to understand the human experience are characteristics needed to interact with a Greek tragedy. It requires the audience to embrace the Terentian adage *homo sum; humani nihil a me alienum puto* ("I am human, I don't consider anything human alien to me").[11] *Trojan Women*, a tragedy performed in 415 BC during the historical conflict between Athens and Sparta, forces the audience to ponder on the repercussions of war by presenting the lament of the Trojan women after they have been captured by the Greeks. In this paper I will dissect the techniques employed by the Greek victors in the play to disempower the conquered women of Troy, such as legal violence, objectification, and silencing, and show how these same practices are still aspects of current dynamics between receiving and incoming communities. As a result, I advocate for the power of genuine listening in counteracting the objectification process perpetrated by receiving communities to the detriment of those seeking sanctuary.

Social Dimension of Greek Theater

At the end of Aristophanes' *Frogs* Pluto bids Aeschylus farewell by saying "Save our city with your good judgments, and educate those who are thoughtless, for they are many."[12] According to Aristophanes, tragedy has the power to save Athens because of its ability to spark thought and analysis among those who lack self-awareness, as suggested by the dichotomy between γνώμαις ἀγαθαῖς ("good judgements") and τοὺς ἀνοήτους ("thoughtless people"). By nature, Greek tragedies explore human life and social interactions within a civic context. As Daniel Mendelsohn points out, the birth and death

[10] Simon Goldhill, *How to Stage Greek Tragedy Today* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 144.
[11] Ter. *The Self-Tormentor,* 77.
[12] Ar. *Ran*. 1500-1503.

of tragedy corresponds to the flourishing and decaying of Athens.[13] From a certain point of view, it might be difficult to reconcile the solemn displays of Athens' power through rituals and processions that preceded theatrical performances with the content of the tragedies which often staged acts of rebellion against the state, but this very conflict "created a space for fruitful consideration of the complexities of life as a citizen."[14] The performances intended to bring citizens together, and, by portraying stories from Greek lore from a distant past to help them analyze the political situation of the time, often in polarizing terms.[15] In particular, the tragedians addressed ethical questions concerning topics such as imperialism, expansion, displacement, and the relationship between human and divine laws.

The genre of tragedy hinges on opposites; it hinges upon otherness.[16] Tragedies were performed for the body of Athenian citizens, thus male, free, and, of course, Athenians. Many tragedies, such as *Trojan Women*, portray groups which stand in complete antithesis to the audience: in this case, female, captive, and foreign. Perhaps this is the reason tragedies moved to pity and fear, based on Aristotelian criteria.[17] Pity could be experienced due to the distancing effect obtained through the "foreignness" of the characters: the audience could see them as objects, something detached from them to feel sorry for. Yet these characters experienced sufferings that could fall upon any human being, since fate is blind to class, gender, and rank, thus representing a source of fear for the audience. *Trojan Women* describes a scenario which resembles the modern humanitarian crisis and depicts the feelings and grief of people, especially women, seeking sanctuary from war and from human annihilation, and the response of those who caused their displacement and are in the position to decide

[13] Daniel Mendelsohn, "Saving the City: Tragedy in Its Civic Context," in *The Greek Plays*, ed. Mary Lefkowitz, 789-798 (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), 790.
[14] Mendelsohn, "Tragedy in Its Civic Context," 797.
[15] Mendelsohn states: "Conflict between ideologies is represented as a conflict between a man and a woman. Women become mouthpieces for values and concerns that were too easily trampled by men" (796). In line with this observation, I treat the relationship between men and women as a struggle between opposites, and not strictly as a gender issue.
[16] Dionysus, the god of transgressing and crossing boundaries, supervises tragedy.
[17] Arist. *Poet.* 1452 a-1453b.

what treatment should be allotted to them. Since theater and polity are intertwined, the composition of *Trojan Women* must be viewed in light of the historical events of the time. From 431 BC until 404 BC Athens was involved in the Peloponnesian war with the exception of the years included in the Peace of Nicias (421 BC), which, nevertheless, according to Thucydides represented a questionable interval.[18] In 416, Athens and Sparta engaged in different endeavors to secure an alliance with the island of Melos. When the Melians refused to become a tributary state to Athens, but instead opted to remain neutral, the Athenians responded violently. Thucydides portrays the brutality of Athens in exerting its supremacy over the Melians: οἱ δὲ ἀπέκτειναν Μηλίων ὅσους ἡβῶντας ἔλαβον, παῖδας δὲ καὶ γυναῖκας ἠνδραπόδισαν ("They killed as many of the Melian men as they were able to capture, whereas they enslaved children and women").[19] Whether the Melian episode prompted *Trojan Women* is an object of debate, but the issue might be superseded by realizing that Athens was indeed at war and episodes of such kind were the norm, as further demonstrated by the vicissitudes between Athens and Mytilene in 428-427 BC.[20] Barbara Goff aptly sums up the situation thus: "It is hard to imagine that *Trojan Women* was not produced as part of a response to the historical Peloponnesian War and the toll it exacted in terms of political discourse as well as of lives and livelihoods."[21]

Theoretical Approach

From a theoretical point of view, I will adopt a formalist approach by observing grammatical structures that highlight an "us versus them" dynamic and a vocabulary pertaining to speech and the

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[18] Sarah Pomeroy, *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 340.

[19] Thuc. 5.116.4.

[20] When Mytilene revolted against Athens, the Athenians promptly suppressed the insurrection and began to discuss what measures should be adopted against the dissidents. Thuc. 3.36.2 presents the proposed course of action, which closely resembles the decision taken against Melos in later years: καὶ ὑπὸ ὀργῆς ἔδοξεν αὐτοῖς οὐ τοὺς παρόντας μόνον ἀποκτεῖναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἅπαντας Μυτιληναίους ὅσοι ἡβῶσι, παῖδας δὲ καὶ γυναῖκας ἀνδραποδίσαι ("and out of anger, it seemed good to the Athenians to not only kill the Mytilineans who were there, but to kill all of the Mytilinean men, and to enslave their children and women"). However, after Diodotus' considerations on the ineffectiveness of violence in securing loyalty among allies, the Athenians did not pursue their original plan.

[21] Barbara Goff, *Euripides: Trojan Women* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 2012), 33.

auditory sphere, in order to shine light on how the characters in the play make sense of their refugee-like experience.[22] In particular, I will consider the objectification process perpetrated at the hand of the Greeks by paying attention to the voice of the verbs employed: active when describing the actions the Greeks perform, and passive in the case of the women. Moreover, I will observe the role of speech in the play through an in-depth analysis of the lexicon related to sound in Hecuba's first monody, noting the wide array of verbs for speaking and singing employed by the women as a medium to connect with their selfhood. I will filter my philological observations through the philosophies of George Hegel, Kelly Oliver, and Anthony Kerby which are valuable tools for shining light on the group dynamics and search for subjectivity portrayed in *Trojan Women*.

In his *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, Hegel discusses the process by which a self-consciousness becomes aware of itself. Self-consciousness is awareness of self-being after having excluded from itself everything else. A self-consciousness exists in function of another self-consciousness, namely in being acknowledged by the other self-consciousness. Hegel defines this process as a struggle for life or death: a self-consciousness proves its own existence through the objectification of the other. In fact, the other is recognized for the one and only purpose of proving the existence of the self as a certainty. A self-consciousness sees itself because the other is a negation of itself.[23] Hegelian philosophy is instrumental in analyzing how the women in the play achieve self-awareness and how the Greeks attempt to enslave them and detract from their selfhood in order to assert their own: it shines light on the struggle for life or death between these two groups. Likewise, Hegel's concept of the self also applies to modern social structures that cause displaced people to be and feel objectified, and struggle to retain their identity.

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[22] I refer to the women's experience as "refugee-like" on the grounds that, because of war, they are about to face forced displacement, thus meeting the UNHCR definition of refugee status.

[23] George Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 111-18.

Harking back to Hegel's considerations, Oliver debunks the widespread idea that minority groups fight for recognition, and claims that they seek witness and compassion instead. The notion of struggle for recognition subjects the oppressed class to the dominant class to an even greater degree, since it implies that, without the validation of the dominant group, the minority group is not existent, thus exacerbating Hegel's master-slave dialectic.[24] Oliver argues that the pairing of addressability and response-ability, namely the ability to be addressed and the ability to respond, represents the cradle of agency and subjectivity: subjectivity is not possessed by either group, but it is found in interaction, in the uninterrupted cycle of speaking and listening which she defines as the process of bearing witness.[25] According to this notion, "bearing witness," as opposed to recognizing, is the very mechanism that catalyzes healing both for the community affected by displacement and for the community meant to provide asylum. The purpose of connecting Greek tragedies to minorities is not an attempt to allow suffering groups to be "recognized" by us, but a catalyst to facilitate change and a way for receiving communities to gain awareness of the ways they disempower vulnerable populations.

Kerby, differently from Hegel and Oliver, explores the theme of subjectivity achieved through the act of narration per se and not necessarily through the encounter with the "other." He theorizes that the act of narrating is fundamental for humans as it represents a vehicle that allows them to make sense of the past, and, even though there will always be inconsistencies in the storyline, narrating bestows upon man the opportunity to understand. In fact, no matter how disjointed someone's life is, the person narrating will always do so in such a way to bring unity to and find meaning and purpose in the experiences of life.[26] Not only does narration help people gain a deeper understanding of events that happened in their personal life, but it also leads to self-awareness and self-understanding. The idea of

[24] Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 27-28.
[25] Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition,* 17.
[26] Anthony Paul Kerby, *Narrative and the Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 56.

retrieving oneself in the past through speech is essential to the comprehension of one's identity.[27] Moreover, the process of describing what happened in the past says more about one's selfhood in the present than one's selfhood in the past. Language treasures within itself the possibility of subjectivity as "it always contains the linguistic forms" to express it.[28] The principles outlined by Kerby support the idea that speech in *Trojan Women* is the very act that allows both the characters of the play and modern refugees to retain and be aware of their identity as subjects and agents. Elaborating on the theories mentioned above, I hope to elucidate why story-telling is of existential importance, and consequently to advocate for the idea that, in order to bear witness to their truth, receiving communities must listen to incoming communities. This concept places "us" and "them" on the same level to the point of erasing the idea of distinct groups, enabling everyone to be an agent and not merely the recipient of someone else's actions.

Legal Violence in Athens

"She spoke in this way while crying, and raised unabating lament."[29] With these words Hecuba is last depicted in the *Iliad*. Grief-stricken, she weeps for the death of her son Hector, breaker of horses, accompanied by the cries of the other Trojan women. This closing scene, so emotionally charged, served as inspiration for Euripides in composing *The Troades*. This play represents an instance of uncensoring in a metapoetic way, since it allows the women's lament (not fully reported in the *Iliad*) to be heard and, at the same time, it allows the reader to witness the process of censoring which occurs within the play. In fact, the Greeks seek to destroy the women's identity by not listening to them and by actively commanding them to not lament. Acts of censorship at the expense of women in the tragedy are not a figment of Euripides' imagination, but they reflect the legal discourse pertaining to

27 Kerby, *Narrative and the Self*, 7.
28 Kerby, 64.
29 Hom. *Il*. 24.760.

women's participation in ritual lament in 6th and 5th century Greece. The attempts to suppress women's voices by means of laws can be viewed as legal violence. The expression "legal violence" refers to "instances in which laws and their implementation give rise to practices that harm individuals physically, economically, psychologically, or emotionally…Legal violence takes place when laws that purport to protect the rights and control behavior for the general good simultaneously marginalize groups of people, leaving them not only unprotected but vulnerable to different forms of abuse."[30]

In order to better understand the implications of these concepts, I will provide a brief summary on speech in fifth century Athens and the role of women in this particular context. Laura McClure observes that "Athens and the Athenians were famous in antiquity for their love of speech…Speech in its many forms played a critical role in constructing civic identity in the democratic Athenian polis. To be a citizen was an act of speech since it required active participation in councils and assemblies."[31] Thus, communication stood at the very core of the Athenian community.[32] However, the rights of παρρησία ("freedom of speech") and ἰσηγορία ("equal right of speech") were solely reserved to Athenian adult males, excluding foreigners, women, and slaves.[33] Although women were not allowed to make their voices heard in a political context, they were expected to participate in certain discursive categories for the benefit of the community, lament being one of them.[34] As Margaret Alexiou informs, this was far from being a natural "outbreak of grief," but lament was instead part of ceremonial rites which included customary elements such as beating of chest, pulling of hair, and loud cries.[35]

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30 Leisy Abrego and Cecilia Menjívar, "Immigrant Latina Mothers as Targets of Legal Violence," *International Journal of Sociology of the Family* 37, no 1 (2011): 11.
31 Laura McClure, *Spoken Like a Woman: Speech and Gender in Athenian Drama* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 8.
32 Calvin Schrag, *The Self After Postmodernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 76-77.
33 Edwin Carawan, "Pericles the Younger and the Citizenship Law," *The Classical Journal* 103, no. 4 (April 2008): 383.
34 Anna Caraveli, "Bridge Between Worlds: The Greek Women's Lament as Communicative Event," *The Journal of American Folklore* 93, no. 368 (1980): 129-30.
35 Margaret Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 3-4, 45.

Evidence of the long heritage of this tradition is found since the time period in which the *Iliad* was composed, ca 800 BC. Book 6 shows that Hector and Andromache belong to two irreconcilable worlds, in spite of their attempt to meet halfway at the Scaean gates.[36] In fact, Hector belongs to the *polis* while Andromache belongs to the realm of the *oikos*, but she attempts to advance her political claims through an anticipatory lament, the only type of speech permitted to her.[37] Women, in fact, were only allowed to make their voices heard on occasions of mourning through the practice of lament. This was a sanctioned genre for women: perhaps due to women's nature and connection to familial bonds, they were the ones expected to mourn the dead.[38] However loud they were expected to lament, women's voices were still not heard. This is exemplified by Briseis and the group of female slaves in the *Iliad*: the reader does not hear their voices until the ritualistic lament they perform on the occasion of Patroclus' death, although it is not explicit that we are dealing with a case of ritual lament.[39] Nevertheless, the brief addition "thus Briseis spoke while crying, and the women mourned for Patroclus, yes, but each woman also lamented for her own sorrows"[40] seems to suggest that it is. It is worth noticing the employment of the term πρόφασιν translated as "yes," "indeed" in most editions,[41] but which more literally means "as an excuse." It seems to suggest that the women had to wait for a legally approved occasion to mourn for themselves, leading one to think that expressions of natural grief were banned, or at least suppressed. In a way, Briseis' lament could represent a veiled form of protest, and an attempt to defy the system while abiding by the system's norms.

This paradigm in gender dynamics continued until the 5th century BC. The examples of Andromache and Briseis show how women could turn sanctioned lament into a powerful and

[36] Hom. *Il*. 6.392-93.
[37] In mentioning this example, I am applying Greek societal norms to the Trojan world. In fact, the Trojans are not portrayed as culturally different in Homer. For a more detailed discussion, see Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1989).
[38] Gail Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices: Women's Laments and Greek Literature*. (London: Routledge, 1995), 66.
[39] Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices,* 260-61.
[40] Hom. *Il*. 19.302.
[41] E.g. Samuel Butler, Loeb, Stanley Lombardo.

subversive channel through which they could claim participation in the *polis* and preserve their individuality. For this reason, in Athens and other parts of the Greek world the prescribed discursive genre for women became at times proscribed when it was used as a form of revolt as observed by Gail Holst-Warhaft: "From an awesome ritual, essential to the community's well-being, women's lament has become a private, shameful therapy, a drug of dubious value that the state must prescribe and, when necessary, proscribe."[42] Prescribed lament began to be considered dangerous because it empowered women as they seemed to gain control over death, and to subvert order with their pathos when they gave way to natural grief, which was seen as the equivalent of "possession, madness, and violence."[43] Therefore, starting from the 6th century with Solon's laws, lament began to be curbed, as Plutarch and Demosthenes report.[44] These laws targeted women and repressed the only instrument available to them to advance political claims, to be agent within the *polis*. They restricted the practice of hiring wailers who were not kin to the deceased, excessive behaviors, and physical expressions of grief.[45] In fact, through their lament women could instigate revenge, accrete power within their clan, and undermine the value of dying for the state.[46] The effort to circumscribe lament within tighter boundaries was an attempt to suppress women's political voice and strictly supervise a medium with potential for protest and rebellion.[47] Silence was eulogized as one of the most praiseworthy features of a woman as exemplified by Sophocles' statement that "silence brings adornment to women."[48] Given this particular context, Euripides (and the other tragedians) defies the norm by staging the women's lament so that his audience could listen to it and, therefore, be faced with "otherness." This legal and

42 Holst-Warhaft, 170.
43 Holst-Warhaft, 70.
44 Plut. *Sol.* 21.4; [Dem.] 43.62-64.
45 Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition*, 18.
46 Alexiou, 21-22. For instance, Hecuba's and Andromache's laments foment feelings of revenge (*Tro.* 282-283, 724).
47 McClure, *Spoken Like a Woman*, 40-41.
48 Soph. *Aj*. 293. Mark Griffith corroborates this principle by stating: "Another characteristic associated by the Greeks more with women than with men is silence." "Antigone and Her Sister(s): Embodying Women" in *Making Silence Speak: Women's Voices in Greek Literature and Society*, ed. Laura McClure, 117-136 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 123.

cultural background permeates *Trojan Women*: in the play the women can denounce the Greeks' barbarity through the vehicle of their lament performed on the occasion of the fall of their city and of the death of their family members.

Objectification in the Play

Difference often represents the key element that allows discrimination to disguise itself as justifiable and ethical. For instance, since women in ancient Greece were considered less valuable than men, rights were granted to each gender based on the supposed difference in their worth.[49] As a result, through the legal suppression of their voices, women were precluded from participating in the political life of the city. Usually, a dominant group deems acceptable to subjugate members of another group on the grounds that they perceive themselves as fundamentally different and separated by a distinct line. This concept represents the underlying principle in the relationship between the Greek men and the Trojan captives in *Trojan women*. In fact, the prominent pattern of an "us versus them" dynamic or master-slave scenario within the play is anticipated by the reoccurrence of the root δουλ* ("slave") referring to the women and δεσπότ* ("master") referring to the men.[50]

The Trojan women are dehumanized and deprived of their agency; in fact, as Finley states, slavery can be defined as "the status in which a man is, in the eyes of the law and public opinion and with respect to all parties, a possession, a chattel, of another man."[51] As elucidated in Hegelian theory, the Troades' enslavement represents a way for the Greeks to witness the effects their actions produce on the women and to assert their identity as agents. In Greek literature, beginning with the *Iliad*, women conquered in war (e.g. Chryseis and Briseis) become objects which grant subjectivity to the

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[49] In his *Politics* (1254b 14) Aristotle says: ἔτι δὲ τὸ ἄρρεν πρὸς τὸ θῆλυ φύσει τὸ μὲν κρεῖττον ("with respect to nature males are better than females").
[50] δουλ* appears 19 times (140, 158, 212, 233, 251, 278, 282, 490, 507, 600, 615, 660, 678, 950, 974, 1271, 1280, 1312, 1330), and δεσπότ* appears 6 times (29, 575, 664, 699, 714, 1145).
[51] Moses Finley, *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), 97.

warriors and are instrumental in forming their heroic identity.[52] In fact, material possessions (women included) stood at the core of the concept of τιμή ("honor") and played a pivotal role in increasing or undermining a hero's selfhood. When Agamemnon demands that Achilles give up Briseis, his prize of war, Achilles defines himself as ἄτιμος.[53] This principle is corroborated by Ajax' reaction (i.e. suicide) when deprived of Achilles' armor, an object whose role and value was comparable to that of women. In fact, in Sophocles' play *Ajax*, the hero states, ἄτιμος Ἀργείοισιν ὧδ' ἀπόλλυμαι, namely "I perish dishonored by the Greeks."[54] Furthermore, it is significant that both heroes employ the same term (ἄτιμος) to describe their condition when deprived of Briseis in the case of Achilles and of the armor in the case of Ajax: it shows that women were placed on the same level of objects. The juxtaposition of ἄτιμος and ἀπόλλυμαι in *Ajax* suggests that lack of honor is a direct threat to one's existence. As Hegel claims, selfhood is determined by the object; if the object ceases to be, the identity of the one depending on the object for the recognition of his own subjectivity is compromised.[55]

This explains Talthybius' apprehension when he suspects that the Trojan women are attempting to take their own lives (298-305). Indeed, by this act the Greeks' honor and, therefore, livelihood would have been at stake: the women are indispensable objects for the preservation of the Greeks' identity as subjects. When the messenger sees fire rising from the women's tents, he exclaims: ἄνοιγ' ἄνοιγε, μὴ τὸ ταῖσδε πρόσφορον/ ἐχθρὸν δ' Ἀχαιοῖς εἰς ἔμ' αἰτίαν βάλῃ ("open up, open up, so that this action beneficial to the women, but so detrimental to the Achaeans, might not be blamed on me," 304-305). Perhaps ἐχθρόν ("hostile") is the most significant word of Talthybius' remark. It indicates a close,

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[52] In *Il.* 1.133 and in *Tro.* 1286 women are referred to as γέρας ("prize"), a neuter singular noun.
[53] Hom. *Il*. 171.
[54] Soph. *Aj*. 440.
[55] Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, 111-12. Only when one self-consciousness is confronted by another entity, it can see itself through the lenses of the other, and thus see itself as "other;" it recognizes the other only in order to prove its own being. After having gained awareness of self-existence, a self-consciousness returns in itself and grants the same to the other self-consciousness. This unified process is actually formed by two movements as it requires the same action from both entities: for this to happen both are needed. This activity cannot work unless both engage in it: the absence of one of them would determine the "death" of the other.

intimate bond between two parties, just as the struggle for subjectivity entails, but for destructive purposes.[56]

In several other instances, the tragedy successfully dissects the ways in which the objectification process takes place to the disadvantage of women. At the beginning of the play, Euripides entrusts Poseidon with the responsibility to first introduce the Trojan women to the audience. They are not presented with their names, as distinct individuals, but as a homogenous group by the term αἰχμαλωτίδων (28), namely "captives." The noun αἰχμαλωτίς indicates those conquered by means of spear (αἰχμά), and it specifically refers to women. The word αἰχμά appears twice throughout the play, and it is portrayed as always causing utter destruction: τείχη…φονία κατέλυσεν αἰχμά ("the murderous spear destroyed the walls," 818-19) and γαῖαν…Ἑλλὰς ὤλεσ᾽αἰχμά ("the Greek spear destroyed the earth," 838-39). Both of the direct objects of κατέλυσεν and ὤλεσε are inanimate entities ("walls" and "earth"). This seems to confirm that the Trojan women are equated to spoils, to mere bodies deprived of their human dimension. Such notion is corroborated by the verbal adjective κληρουμένων (29) which modifies αἰχμαλωτίδων. This participle which means "apportioned by lot" is expressed in the passive voice indicating that the women are being acted upon and deemed as war loot by the Greeks.

Hecuba, in particular, is introduced as follows: πάρεστιν Ἑκάβη κειμένη πυλῶν πάρος ("Hecuba is here lying in front of the gates," 37). The participle κειμένη, from κεῖμαι, is used in Homer to refer to corpses with the meaning of "lying dead,"[57] suggesting to the reader that Hecuba's vital force has been taken from her and she has become a lifeless vessel. The content as well as the morphology of several sentences emphasize the Greeks' attempt to annihilate the Trojan women and deny them their ability to act. Most of the verbs referring to the men are expressed in the active voice, while the women are frequently the recipients of the Greek's actions (i.e. "to be allocated," "dealt to,"

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[56] Simon Goldhill, *Reading Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 83-84. While ἔχθρα ("enmity") and φιλία ("friendship") are antithetical notions, they both imply a personal and binding relationship.
[57] E.g. Hom. *Il*. 5.467, 16.541.

"reserved," "classified," "was slaughtered," "will be forced," "we are led," "we are taken"). [58]

Grammatically, the objectification process of the Troades culminates when they are signified by the accusative feminine article τάς (30):

> πολλοῖς δὲ κωκυτοῖσιν αἰχμαλωτίδων
> βοᾷ Σκάμανδρος δεσπότας κληρουμένων.
> καὶ **τὰς** μὲν Ἀρκάς, **τὰς** δὲ Θεσσαλὸς λεὼς
> εἴληχ᾽ Ἀθηναίων τε Θησεῖδαι πρόμοι.
>
> "The Scamander echoes with the cries of the slaves
> who are being allotted to their masters.
> The Arcadian men took some and the Thessalian took some,
> and the sons of Theseus, leaders of the Athenians, took others."[59]

The objectification of the women in the play does not simply reflect interpersonal dynamics, but it seems to be descriptive of a structural social pattern. The women are completely removed from the Greek men with the exception of Talthybius, the herald, who acts as a bridge between the two worlds, but, to begin with, they are distanced even from the audience. In fact, Poseidon, in the prologue, presents Hecuba in these terms: τὴν δ᾽ ἀθλίαν τήνδ᾽ εἴ τις εἰσορᾶν θέλει ("If anyone desires to look at this wretched one," 36), projecting her as an object necessitating recognition at the discretion of the observer. In Lacanian thought "vision operates across distance and separation that creates this gap… [it] inaugurates an abyss."[60] The abyss created in the tragedy seems to be deeper than a personal choice as demonstrated by Talthybius' interaction with the women. Scholars have wondered whether he is a sympathetic or cruel character since he displays fluid behavior, now showing compassion to the women, now othering them. [61]

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58 Eur. *Tro*. 29, 32, 33, 35, 40, 43, 1310.
59 *Tro.* 28-31; emphasis added. Cf. *Tro*. 70: Αἴας εἷλκε Κασσάνδραν βίᾳ ("Ajax dragged Cassandra by force)," where Cassandra is the accusative direct object of εἷλκε.
60 Oliver, 184. Despite disagreeing with it, Oliver engages with Lacan's theory of the mirror which posits that a child achieves awareness of its subjectivity by interacting with its reflection in the mirror as if it was another entity. According to Lacan, this process demonstrates the alienating function of vision.
61 Goff, 49.

When he informs Andromache of the imminent death of Astyanax, he states, οὐχ ἑκὼν γὰρ ἀγγελῶ ("I will bring my announcement against my will," 710) implying that he does not have full decisional power and that he is hindered in his desire to commiserate and bring relief to the women. However, just a few lines later, he draws a clear distinction between Greeks (him included) and the women, perpetuating the pervasive "us versus them" dynamic: ἡμεῖς δὲ πρὸς γυναῖκα μάρνασθαι μίαν/ οἷοί τε ("we are capable to fight against one woman," 731-732). The dialectic encounter is a violent one as demonstrated by the presence of the preposition πρὸς ("against"), an indicator of strong antagonism, and the verb μάρναμαι ("to fight"), which, in the Homeric poems, describes situations involving hostile confrontation between two opposing parties.[62] The complexities coexisting in Talthybius can be summarized by Sullivan's considerations: "At a strictly logical level, Talthybius has no part in the decision-making process that results in the assignment of the Trojan women. Onstage, however, he is the very agent of their fates."[63] Talthybius seems to understand the flaws of the system, the profound unfairness of the women's dehumanization; however, he remains subservient to and complicit of the objectification process deeply entrenched in the fabric of his society. By reducing the women to trophies, the Greeks gain in honor, sense of self, and power both at as individuals and as a group. However, physical objectification constitutes only one part of the alienation process at the expense of the Trojan women, for they are also asked to relinquish their voice.

Silencing in the Play

The ability to express ideas and feelings through voice is a claim to existence; it states presence. It is the action of a subject that asks to be witnessed as such. For this reason, the act of censoring is an attempt to reduce a person to an object, an agent to a recipient. Having a voice is not only symbol and

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[62] Hom. *Il*. 3.307, 5.33, 12.40, 15.475, 16.195; *Od*. 3.85, 11.513, 22.228.

[63] James Sullivan, "The Agency of the Herald Talthybius in Euripides' "Trojan Women"," *Mnemosyne*, Fourth Series, 60, no. 3 (2007): 475.

manifestation of identity, but also of power. In fact, language is performative: what one says affects and shapes reality.[64] The Greeks try to undermine the power that language grants to the women in order to create an increasingly wider gap between themselves and their captives. In the prologue, Poseidon employs a palette of expressions indicating emptiness and lifelessness which represents a prelude to the attempted annihilation of the women.[65] He uses terms such as ὄλωλε ("to destroy," 9), πορθηθεῖσ᾽("to plunder," 9), ἔρημα ("deserted," 15), φόνῳ ("bloodshed," 16), πέπτωκε ("to fall," 17), λείπω ("to leave behind," 25), ἐρημία ("desolation," 26, 97), φροῦδος ("vanished," 41), κατῃθαλωμένην ("to burn to ashes," 60), ἔπερσάν ("to waste," 72), and ἐκπορθεῖ ("to pillage," 95). These expressions anticipate how the Achaeans will empty the women of their life and divest them of subjectivity through silencing. In fact, not only do the Greeks treat the Trojan women as mere objects at a physical level, but they also intend to dehumanize them psychologically by suppressing their ability to speak.

Later on, Andromache observes that it is characteristic of beasts to remain silent (τὸ θηριῶδες ἄφθογγόν, 671). Throughout the play the Greeks attempt to mute women, and in a few instances the Troades themselves wonder if it would not be better for them to succumb to silence (110, 384, 694-695). Talthybius urges Andromache to remain silent in the hope that the Greeks might allow her to bury Astyanax whom they had just killed: σιγῶσα δ᾽ εὖ τε τὰς τύχας κεκτημένη/ τὸν τοῦδε νεκρὸν οὐκ ἄθαπτον ἂν λίποις/ αὐτή τ᾽ Ἀχαιῶν πρευμενεστέρων τύχοις ("If you remain silent and endure well your fate, perhaps you will not have to leave behind the body of your son unburied, and you might find the Greeks more gracious towards you," 737-9). These lines stand as evidence of the attempt to dehumanize Andromache in the most vicious way possible: she is advised not to lament the death of Astyanax (σιγῶσα, 737), forcing her to choose between her ability to grieve and proper burial for her son.[66] In

[64] "When we issue any utterance whatsoever, are we not 'doing something'?" John Langshaw Austin, *How to Do Things with Words—The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 92.
[65] Goff, 26.
[66] Talthybius' command breaks apart the traditional funeral rites which included lament and burial. This seems to be a reflection of legislation that attempted to limit the role of women in said ceremonies.

ancient Mediterranean cultures, the act of lament stood at the very core of female identity,[67] as testified by Hecuba's address to Astyanax:

> συλώμεθα σὴν ψυχὴν ἀδίκως
> μήτηρ κἀγώ. τί πάθω; τί σ᾽ ἐγώ,
> δύσμορε, δράσω; τάδε σοι δίδομεν
> πλήγματα κρατὸς στέρνων τε κόπους·
> τῶνδε γὰρ ἄρχομεν.
>
> "Your mother and I are unjustly deprived of you.
> What should I feel? What should I do for you, o wretched one?
> We can give you these things:
> to strike our heads and to beat our chests;
> for, we have control over these things."[68]

This passage, and in particular the phrase τῶνδε γὰρ ἄρχομεν, indicates that lament, with all of its ritualistic components, is the locus of the women's agency; it is the means by which they can shape reality and preside over their *oikos*. In fact, it is the expression of their power and authority, and by this practice they can denounce injustice (συλώμεθα σὴν ψυχὴν **ἀδίκως**; emphasis added). Therefore, not only is Andromache deprived of her hope in a future posterity, but she is also required to relinquish her right and duty to lament her loss.

After Astyanax' death and Hecuba's lament for her grandson, Helen is brought to Menelaus' presence. Although she does not properly belong to the group of the Trojans due to her Greek origins, nevertheless, as a woman, she is also objectified and silenced. In fact, Menelaus is not keen on permitting Helen to respond to her accusations as exemplified by the following portion of their dialogue:

> ΕΛΕΝΗ ἔξεστιν οὖν πρὸς ταῦτ᾽ ἀμείψασθαι λόγῳ,
> ὡς οὐ δικαίως, ἢν θάνω, θανούμεθα;
>
> ΜΕΝΕΛΑΟΣ οὐκ ἐς λόγους ἐλήλυθ᾽ ἀλλά σε κτενῶν.
>
> Helen: "Can I respond to these things,
> showing that, if I die, I will die unjustly?"

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67 Mary R. Bachvarova, "The Destroyed City in Ancient "World History": From Agade to Troy" in *The Fall of Cities in the Mediterranean: Commemoration in Literature, Folk-song, and Liturgy,* eds. Mary R. Bachvarova, Dorota Dutsch, and Ann Suter 36-78 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 69.
68 Eur. *Tro*. 791-95.

Menelaus: "I did not come to talk, but I came to kill you."[69]

The coexistence of the notions of talking and killing in the same line is significant as the act of killing is the ultimate attempt to silence. By prohibiting Helen to respond he attacks her very right to subjectivity. It is worth noticing that Helen uses ἔξεστιν, a verb which, at its very core, expresses the ability and possibility to do something; it does not indicate permission. Helen's courageous, "Can I respond…?" seems to become more of an existential question for Helen, than a request for permission from Menelaus. This minor detail suggests that Helen depowers Menelaus, her censor, by not submitting her agency to him, but by searching for her agency inside herself. Therefore, when Menelaus prohibits her from talking, he is actually attempting to suppress her identity as a capable subject.

In another occasion, when Hecuba begs him to take action against Helen, Menelaus dismisses her by commanding her to be quiet (παῦσαι, γεραιά, namely "cease, old woman," 1046). Hecuba also wonders whether she should mourn or just let herself and her story sink into oblivion: τί με χρὴ σιγᾶν, τί δὲ μὴ σιγᾶν; ("What should I hold silent? What should I not hold silent?" 110). Neil Croally states: "Hecuba's questions also direct us to the sense in which the destruction of Troy and its consequences are, for the women, so crushing that they are ineffable; yet at the same time, it is part of their tragic predicament that their only recourse is language."[70] Although Hecuba's grief is ineffable, speech embodies hope of survival; it constitutes the only tool capable of keeping the women connected to the present and to life. In his evaluation of the Trojan women's life, Croally discusses how neither the past nor the future can console them and poses the following question: "But given the nostalgia and the concern about the future, what of the present?"[71] While Troy is only a bitter-sweet memory and the future is the epitome of emptiness, the Troades exist in the present through speech. Speaking about the

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[69] Eur. *Tro*. 903-5.

[70] Neil Croally, *Euripidean Polemic: The Trojan Women and the Function of Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 86.

[71] Croally, *The Trojan Women and the Function of Tragedy*, 199.

spatial component, Croally argues that "it is as if, in the here and now of the play, the normal spatial determinations have themselves died; as if they are, for the moment, absent and will be reformed only in revenge or in slavery."[72] However, one may argue that speech fills the vacuum and subsumes the spatial-temporal function and it becomes the only dimension in which the women can exist. While Goff observes that "*Trojan Women* [does not] call upon theatrical devices like the *ekkuklema* or the *mechane*,"[73] speech becomes the metaphorical *deus ex machina* capable of saving the women from utter destruction.

Speech as Subjectivity

Hecuba's first monody, through its display of eloquence, stands in antithesis to the objectification process perpetrated by the Greeks by conveying the complexity of the women's emotions. It does not come in the form of a supplication in order to change their fate, but as a claim, perhaps unconscious, to existence. Judith Mossman endorses this concept by saying "that the articulate Greek women of tragedy, just by speaking, can be seen to lay claim to full subjectivity, even if that claim is often subsequently challenged or denied."[74] Hecuba's lexical richness represents an attempt to express all of the facets of her existence and of her feelings. This seems to suggest that, for Hecuba, lamenting and recalling her past represent a cathartic outlet able to channel her grief.[75] In discussing the relationship between narration and selfhood, Kerby claims that "subjectivity is attained in discourse by assuming the role of "I" in that discourse. "I" designates this speaking subject at the instance of utterance,

[72] Croally, 200.
[73] Goff, 23.
[74] Judith Mossman, "Women's Voices," in *A Companion to Greek Tragedy*, ed. Justina Gregory 352-365 (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 353. See also Olivia Dunham, "Private Speech, Public Pain: The Power of Women's Laments in Ancient Greek Poetry and Tragedy," *CrissCross* Vol.1 no 1, article 2 (2014), where she talks about lamentation and "cathartic joy" (14).
[75] Pietro Pucci observes a similar pattern in Medea: "The nurse who elicits our pity for her mistress in the opening speech of Medea is conscious of satisfying her desire for lament and so gaining relief. The nurse suggests that Medea's grief has no such outlet, and theorizes about the ability of poetry and song to heal grief" (161).

just as it designates other speakers in their turn.”[76] Based on this observation, it is worth noting that Hecuba begins her monody by giving orders to herself in the second person singular imperative and does not employ the first person singular pronoun until later:

ἄνα, δύσδαιμον· πεδόθεν κεφαλὴν
ἐπάειρε δέρην <τ’>· οὐκέτι Τροία
τάδε καὶ βασιλῆς ἐσμεν Τροίας.
μεταβαλλομένου δαίμονος **ἄνσχου**.
πλεῖ κατὰ πορθμόν, **πλεῖ** κατὰ δαίμονα.

“O wretched one, raise your head and neck
from the ground. Troy is no longer
and we are no longer rulers of Troy.
Endure your changing fate.
Sail along the strait, sail according to your fate.”[77]

The imperative mood solely expresses the will of the speaker and consequently deprives the listener of agency. Hecuba becomes the object of her own commands demonstrating that she has internalized the dehumanizing behavior of the Greeks towards her. Nevertheless, the very act of alienating herself through speech allows her to gain back her identity as an independent subject. Hecuba’s process of subjectification is prompted by her fulfilling both the role of speaker and recipient; through her lamentation the queen of Troy is able to achieve self-validation as demonstrated by her usage of the first person singular pronoun (μοι) in line 106.

Hecuba’s lament follows the conventions typical for the genre. For example, Margaret Alexiou points out that it was traditional for an ancient lament to start with rhetorical questions in order to express fear of failing “to find adequate words for the occasion.”[78] Hecuba begins by saying:

αἰαῖ αἰαῖ.
τί γὰρ οὐ πάρα μοι μελέᾳ στενάχειν,
ᾗ πατρὶς ἔρρει καὶ τέκνα καὶ πόσις;
ὦ πολὺς ὄγκος συστελλόμενος
προγόνων, ὡς οὐδὲν ἄρ’ ἦσθα.
τί με χρὴ σιγᾶν, τί δὲ μὴ σιγᾶν;

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76 Kerby, 68.
77 Eur. *Tro*. 98-102; emphasis added.
78 Alexiou, 161.

"Ah me, ah me!
What can I not lament?
My country, my children, and my husband are gone!
O great majesty of my ancestors, now destroyed,
you were nothing.
What should I hold silent? What should I not hold silent?" [79]

In the *Iliad*, Hecuba also opens her lament with a question: "Why should I live suffering terribly now that you have died?" (22. 431-2). The hesitation expressed by the question perhaps shows the desire to yield to the annihilation sanctioned by silence, and represents an attempt to search for meaning in living. However, in about 50 lines in Euripides' play Hecuba employs a broad spectrum of words that pertain to the auditory sphere, including a wide array of verbs that indicate the act of lamenting, such as στενάχειν ᾖ ("to lament," 106), θρηνῆσαι ("to sing a dirge," 111), αἰάζωμεν ("to wail," 145). She also employs κελαδεῖν which means "to sound as flowing water" (121). The presence of this verb is significant since the Trojan women are about to cross the sea: it seems to suggest that even the waters are witnesses of and harmonize with Hecuba's sorrow.[80] She also relies upon several nouns and adjectives pertaining to the auditory sphere:

ἐλέγους (119)	"song of mourning"
μοῦσα (120)	"music"
αὐλῶν (126)	"flute"
παιᾶνι	"choral song"
συρίγγων (127)	"shepherd's pipe" or "mouthpiece of the aulos"
εὐφθόγγων (127)	"well sounding"
φωνᾷ (127)	"voice"

[79] Eur. *Tro*. 105-110.
[80] A parallel example can be found when the Muse is invoked to sing about the women's sorrows: someone has to voice their pain. For an in depth discussion about the role of the Muse in *Trojan Women* see Dana Lacourse Munteanu, "The Tragic Muse and the Anti-Epic Glory of Women in Euripides' *Troades*," *The Classical Journal* 106, no. 2 (2011): 129-47. On rivers as witnesses of the women's pain see Casey Dué, *The Captive Woman's Lament in Greek Tragedy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 138-139.

κλαγγᾶν (147)	"twang" or "confused cries of throng"
μολπάν (147)	"song" or "rhythmic movement with a song"

Hecuba's employment of multiple synonyms to indicate the notion of music can be ascribed to the rhetorical figure of *variatio*. Her insistence on terms of sound does not result into a futile abundance of words, but the semantic nuances conveyed by the different expressions she uses reflect the complexities of her experience as a slave, as a mother, and as a queen, causing the commotion of her feelings to overflow into lexical richness. In fact, through this device, Hecuba attempts to free herself from the emotions that grip her soul and to make her voice heard. She chooses life over death by choosing speech over silence.[81]

At the beginning of the play, the queen of Troy lies outstretched on the ground, silent,[82] but as soon as she starts speaking, she arises (98-99). In fact, in agreement with Oliver's view on the link between speech and subjectivity, it seems that Hecuba's livelihood is determined by her power and ability to respond and to be addressed whether by the chorus or Talthybius. The connection between word/sound and existence is furthered by the condition of the city of Troy itself. Just as Hecuba rises from the ground as soon as words come out of her mouth, in a specular but reversed way, the city of Troy, as soon as it falls to the ground, loses the sound of its name. In fact, when Hecuba and the chorus witness that Troy is about to fall, they claim that their beloved city does not have a name anymore: "Soon you will fall down to the dear earth and be without a name" (1319).[83] Without a name, Troy will not exist anymore,[84] but the queen of Troy, defying her present circumstances, manages to reverse her

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[81] Ann Suter observes: "The future of all the women is really in the army's hands. So the women would seem here to have no authority either, but for one thing: they can lament. And lament is the authoritative voice of women, the one place where, traditionally, they spoke with power, and were heard" (20-21). See Ann Suter, "Lament in Euripides' *Trojan Women*," *Mnemosyne*, Fourth Series, 56, no. 1 (2003): 1-28.
[82] Cf. *Tro*. 462.
[83] τάχ᾽ ἐς φίλαν γᾶν πεσεῖσθ᾽ ἀνώνυμοι (1319). Cf. Τροία, τὸ κλεινὸν ὄνομ᾽ ἀφαιρήσῃ τάχα. /πιμπρᾶσί σ᾽… ("Troy, soon you will be deprived of your famous name; they are burning you…" 1278-79).
[84] This idea is reminiscent of Heidegger's philosophy which posits that the power of "thinging" of something resides in its ability to be addressed.

dehumanization through her voice. The metamorphosis Hecuba undergoes can be summarized by Oliver's words: "Becoming an object means becoming inarticulate. Only by testifying, by witnessing objectification, can survivors reinscribe their subjectivity into situations that mutilated it to the point of annihilation."[85] Hecuba bears witness to herself and to the other women, and vice versa: through this cycle of speaking and listening, they represent a multitude of experiences and refuse to be encircled in one group. Combining philological observations with Oliver's philosophical considerations leads us to see the play as a hymn to resistance and subjectivity. Hecuba and, more in general, all of the women in the play are addressable and response-able through their monodies and their *kommoi*, antiphonal in nature, thus turning their laments into healing music.

***Trojan Women* and the Modern Humanitarian Crisis**

The tragic events portrayed in Euripides' play, such as the devastation caused by war, loss of loved ones, objectification of women, and deportation are unfortunately not simply incidents remote from our modern society. In fact, although there are significant differences between the enslavement experienced by the Trojan women and the challenges of integration that displaced people face today, a good portion of this narrative resembles the situation of the millions of people that are currently seeking sanctuary as discussed in the introduction. The processes of legal violence, objectification, and silencing through which the Greeks attempt to disempower the Trojan Women take place in our modern societies as well. Receiving societies alienate and marginalize asylum seekers through their legal systems with the result that refugees are silenced. [86] In this section I will explore and analyze these phenomena which are all the more identifiable through the lenses of *Trojan Women*. Both of these processes aim at disempowering displaced populations, and I argue that being aware and being

[85] Oliver, 99.
[86] It is not my intent to stereotype or homogenize people in hosting countries; I am observing structural societal patterns that lead to these phenomena, and often overpower individuals' good intentions.

able to recognize these patterns will highlight the ways in which receiving societies need to refrain from harming incoming societies.[87] The play can act as a prism refracting the issue of displacement into all of its different nuances as it did for its Greek audience by creating a favorable environment for scrutiny and analysis.[88] DiAngelo claims that "ideologies are the frameworks through which we are taught to represent, interpret, understand, and make sense of social existence. Because these ideas are constantly reinforced, they are very hard to avoid believing and internalizing."[89] *Trojan Women* can work as a catalyst for thinking, as a tool to dismantle the ideologies that are complicit of social inequalities, but that usually remain unquestioned.

Legal Violence Today

Alexiou, Duè, and Holst-Warhaft agree that the laws introduced in Greece in the 6th century to revise the practice of lament and funerary rites specifically targeted women, while they did not affect the role of men in said ceremonies.[90] These measures aimed at containing the power women could exert in the *polis* through their voice. Laws that exclude particular groups from political discourse establish and perpetuate structural inequalities that cause minorities to accept their disadvantage in the power hierarchy fearing that worse consequences will fall upon them, should they not abide by the system. In this regard, DiAngelo observes: "Very little external pressure needs to be applied to keep people in their places, once the rationalizations for inequality are internalized, both sides will uphold the relationship."[91] This principle is exemplified in the play by Hecuba's invitation to Andromache:

> ἀλλ᾽, ὦ φίλη παῖ, τὰς μὲν Ἕκτορος τύχας
> ἔασον· οὐ μὴ δάκρυά νιν σώσῃ τὰ σά.
> τίμα δὲ τὸν παρόντα δεσπότην σέθεν…

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[87] In fact, it is not a matter of empowering: this notion hides within itself the claim that receiving societies are superior, as if they could grant increased agency and power to incoming people, confirming once again the recognition pattern outlined in Hegel's master-slave dialectic.
[88] Goldhill, 127-134
[89] Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 21.
[90] Alexiou, 21; Duè, *The Captive Woman's Lament*, 47; Holst-Warhaft, 95.
[91] Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility*, 22.

κἂν δρᾷς τάδ᾽, ἐς τὸ κοινὸν εὐφρανεῖς φίλους
καὶ παῖδα τόνδε παιδὸς ἐκθρέψειας ἄν.

"O dear child, let go of the fate of Hector:
in no way can your tears save him.
But honor your present master…
If you do this, you might make your friends rejoice in common
and bring up from childhood this grandson of mine."[92]

Hecuba's recommendation to Andromache to relinquish her lament for Hector and reshape her narrative suggests that the women understood that their only chance for survival was to endure the violence perpetrated by the system and to remain subservient to their masters. This choice reflects their belief that challenging the social structure could have harmed them to an even greater degree, as Andromache states: τόνδε δ᾽ αὖ στυγοῦσ᾽ ἐμαυτῆς δεσπόταις μισήσομαι ("if I hate my present husband, I will face the hate of my masters," 663-64). Examining the social and legal dynamics within the play may help a modern reader more easily discern the ways in which laws in receiving societies disempower displaced populations.

Abrego and Lakhani highlight that while most view laws, including laws regulating immigration, as impartial and unquestionable, they often "serve as legitimating sources for the harmful treatment of immigrants."[93] Instances of such kind can be observed in the conflation of immigration law and criminal law, and in the creation of structural inequalities that are seen as acceptable and natural. Laws' often nebulous boundaries cause incoming groups to be relegated to a liminal state for an indefinite amount of time causing them to feel marginalized and undermined in the exercise of their rights. For example, legal complexities in the process of applying for asylum keep them waiting, lingering between hope and desperation.[94] In his publication *Asylum Denied*, David Ngaruri Kenney, a Kenyan activist persecuted for political reasons, describes his odyssey in filing his asylum request in

[92] Eur. *Tro*. 697-702.
[93] Leisy J. Abrego and Sarah M. Lakhani, "Incomplete Inclusion: Legal Violence and Immigrants in Liminal Legal Statuses," *Law & Policy* 37, no. 4 (November 2015): 267.
[94] Ibid.

the United States. The most troubling portion of his narration is the fact that the legal system constantly questions the veracity of his story, and because of this he is quickly trapped in a tangled net of legal spider webs. His story needs to be shaped and reshaped by his lawyers, just as now scholars and legal figures aid people at the United States' Southern border by instructing them on how to tell their stories to portray credible fear.[95] The legal system causes asylum seekers' voices to be silenced or molded to meet its unclear and debatable criteria.[96] Just like Andromache, asylum seekers are forced to adapt their stories in order to not incur in worse consequences and to nurture a dim hope for survival and for a better future.

Legal violence today can also be observed in the way countries of the Global North devise and endorse policies of remote control to keep asylum seekers from migrating in the first place, consigning them to persecution and violence.[97] While we hear the dramatic stories of those who managed to escape to a safe country, there are millions of stories that will never be heard because of these practices. Even when refugees reach a supposed sanctuary, their legal and political voice is suppressed. FitzGerald and Arar argue that "for some refugees, the pathway to political rights is generations long and elusive, if not unattainable. Stateless refugee status is passed from one generation to the next like a nationality derived from *jus sanguinis*."[98] The fact that refugees are deprived of their political voice and silenced in the legal sphere implies that receiving societies are speaking on their behalf and impairing their ability to express their opinions concerning issues that pertain to them and to the society they now belong to. Legal silencing turns them into an invisible, inexistent group whose voice and

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95 David Ngaruri Kenney and Philip G. Schrag, *Asylum Denied: A Refugee's Struggle for Safety in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 113-19, 253.
96 María Josefina Saldana-Portillo, "The Violence of Citizenship in the Making of Refugees: The U.S. and Central America." *Social Text*, 37.4 (2019): 141.
97 David FitzGerald, *How Rich Democracies Repel Asylum Seekers,* 4-6.
98 David Scott Fitzgerald and Rawan Arar, "The Sociology of Refugee Migration," *Annual Review of Sociology* 44, no. 1 (2018): 398.

conditions are discounted, unless they can embody "otherness" as I will demonstrate in the next section.

Objectification Today

For the purpose of tragedy, a genre that stages opposites, the Trojan women embody otherness, as echoed by Menelaus' remarks concerning Hecuba's invocation to Zeus: τί δ᾽ ἔστιν; εὐχὰς ὡς ἐκαίνισας θεῶν ("What is this? How strange are your prayers to the gods!", 889). The participle ἐκαίνισας ("strange") designates something unusual and implies difference.[99] Therefore, this term creates a layer of separation that leads to objectification and discrimination. This rings true in our societies as showed by Kitty Calavita's comment: "Immigrants are in some way the quintessential other, having crossed physical borders to relocate in a community other than their own…the modern figure of the foreigner—not only as a legal category but as a political epithet, condensing around itself pure outsiderhood."[100] The objectification of incoming groups takes place in many different ways; among these, the most noticeable is labor exploitation which finds its direct parallel in the Trojan women's enslavement. Taking Spain as an example, Kitty Calavita illustrates how immigrants' status is maintained fluid by laws that not only do not provide immigrants with safety and protection, but are also responsible for creating illegality. In fact, the legal system transforms "outsiders into outlaws."[101] This condition is instrumental for the Spanish capitalistic economy in the fact that Third-world immigrants support it by providing cheap labor. According to the experience of many incomers,

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[99] Additionally, the term βάρβαρος ("non-Greek," "foreign") referring to the Trojans appears six times throughout the play (*Tro*. 477, 771, 933, 973, 1021, 1277). It is worth mentioning that it is mainly used by the Trojan women themselves as if they have internalized their foreignness.

[100] Kitty Calavita, "Immigration, Law, and Marginalization in a Global Economy: Notes from Spain," *Law & Society Review* 32, no. 3 (1998): 559.

[101] Calavita, 560.

employers specifically hire people with illegal status, and are unwilling to aid them in their legalization process.[102]

In addition to drawing attention to patterns of blatant exploitation and marginalization, the grammatical structure of Euripides' text illuminates a major ethical issue in the interaction between members of receiving communities and asylum seekers that could easily go unnoticed. The theme of power and agency in the play is showed through the dichotomy between active and passive verbs and the strategic usage of direct objects. In trying to aid and support those who have been displaced, there is the widespread idea among people with good intentions that receiving societies are the ones granting refugees an opportunity to speak. When the scenario is conceived in these terms, refugees are still portrayed as the direct object of the conversation. The idea implicit in this formulation is that the power to be human through speech is not found within them, but it is bestowed upon them. Despite being a less obvious example of objectification, this approach, definable as "white savior mentality," is still a form objectification.[103] Concerning this topic Matthew Hughey claims:

> "The anxious allure of saviorism has saturated our contemporary logic… [It] separates people into those who are redeemers (whites) and those who are redeemed or in need of redemption (non-whites). Such imposing patronage enables an interpretation of nonwhite characters and culture as essentially broken, marginalized, pathological, while whites can emerge as messianic characters that easily fix nonwhite pariah with their superior moral and mental abilities."[104]

Rajaram observes this phenomenon using as his case study an initiative organized by Oxfam designed to encourage listening to refugees' stories. Although Rajaram acknowledges Oxfam's good desires, he points out how refugees' stories were used as instruments to promote the NGO's agenda, including raising money. The stories were selected to portray a specific message causing them to be

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102 The same principle applies to the United States. See Natalia Molina, *How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 9-10.
103 David Scott Fitzgerald and Rawan Arar, "The Sociology of Refugee Migration," 391.
104 Matthew W. Hughey, *The White Savior Film: Content, Critics, and Consumption* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014), 2.

decontextualized and appear timeless.[105] In this project the incoming communities are not placed on an equal level, but are put on display and portrayed as an "object of rescue."[106] If listening to displaced communities does not occur impromptu, in a natural setting, but it is encouraged within a structure or a frame without fully disclosing intentions and purposes, it perpetuates objectification and it constrains people's agency. As Kelly Oliver notes, at times, recalling one's story might be damaging as the person sees itself re-objectified in the past, and consequently relives those same feelings in the present. Collecting refugees' stories cannot be used to change receiving societies, because it reiterates the very same process of exploitation that it supposedly attempts to target. As Goff observes, "the more we understand the herald and Menelaus as ordinary and ineffectual, the more they become a version of us."[107] In fact, given the structural inequalities deeply rooted in our societies, no one is exempt from the risk of objectifying someone else. However, besides highlighting the disparities between the Greeks and the Trojans, Euripides succeeds in unothering the other: the women's tears become a universal message of humanity and a testament to the salvific role of lament.[108]

Speaking and Listening

In the introduction of Nadia Murad's book,[109] her barrister, Amal Clooney, advocates for the power of speech:

> "There is no doubt ISIS tried to silence Nadia when they kidnapped and enslaved her, raped and tortured her, and killed seven members of her family in a single day. But Nadia refused to be silenced. She has defied all the labels that life has given her: Orphan. Rape victim. Slave. Refugee. She has instead created new ones: Survivor. Yazidi leader. Women's advocate. Nobel Peace Prize nominee. United Nations Goodwill Ambassador. And now author."[110]

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105 Prem Kumar Rajaram, "Humanitarianism and Representations of the Refugee," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 15, no. 3 (January 2002): 247-64.
106 Yen Le Espiritu, *Body Counts: The Vietnam War and Militarized Refuge(es)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 188.
107 Goff, 49.
108 Duè, 150.
109 Nadia Murad is a Yazidi refugee, survivor from ISIS captivity. She is 2018 Peace Nobel Price and activist for Yazidi rights.
110 Nadia Murad, *The Last Girl: My Story of Captivity, and My Fight Against the Islamic State* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2017), xi.

It is worth noticing that in the climactic escalation of titles Amal Clooney chose to place "author" as the apex. The ability to create and spark change through the power of word is that which reminds refugees of their identity as subjects, as humans. In a similar way, through her lament Hecuba denounces the brutality of Odysseus, her new master: ἰώ μοί μοι./μυσαρῷ δολίῳ λέλογχα φωτὶ δουλεύειν,/πολεμίῳ δίκας, παρανόμῳ δάκει ("Ah me, ah me! I have obtained by lot to be a slave to an abominable, treacherous man, an enemy to justice, a lawless monster," 283-84). Not only can lament expose injustice, but it can also become a refuge from emotional oppression. In fact, when Gioia was asked why she tells her story, she responded that it is a way to free her body from pain, and be reminded that her experiences are different from everyone else's experiences. It is not the task of receiving groups to give incoming communities a voice, or to grant them an opportunity to speak and to be human—this would only intensify the process of dehumanization that annihilated them in the first place—but as they speak, members of receiving societies need to listen. Dori Laub claims that the listener plays an essential role when a traumatic experience is being voiced. While the traumatic event is documented by historical facts, the trauma itself does not find materialization until the person who experienced it speaks and the hearer listens. The listener must be mindful of the fears and obstacles that the speaker has to overcome while narrating. In fact, for a person dealing with trauma, silence often represents both a refuge, as he or she is afraid to be listened to and to listen to their own trauma, and a prison, as it keeps them from elaborating what they have experienced.[111]

It is significant that Hecuba in *Trojan Women*, although she debates whether she should be silent or speak, opts for the second possibility. Perhaps she understands that, even if voicing her trauma can be intimidating, especially as the women are being silenced by the Greeks, speaking represents her only hope for survival. As we listen to Hecuba, Nadia, Gioia, and other refugees we become "co-

[111] Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1992).

owners" of their stories. As Kelly Oliver claims, subjectivity does not lie in one group or the other, but it is a dynamic entity that can only be reached together in the act of interacting. Her innovative understanding of "otherness" and difference teaches that there is not a gap between people, and that, while vision and gaze have been considered distancing factors, they are actually connecting elements. The distance between one person and the other is not a vacuum; it is not irreconcilable space. There are air and light that reach the eyes and allow us to see the other person. Just as there are electric and gravitational potential energies, we are all connected by affective and social energies.[112] Through this understanding of the world there are no fixed positions. The exchange that makes this relationship of compassion possible is communication, namely the continuous address-ability and response-ability of a subject.

Conclusion

In her analysis of totalitarian regimes, Hannah Arendt attempts to identify why this form of power is so appealing and successful. She defines it as a movement that revolves around the mass. Totalitarianism attracts people who are usually indifferent, politically unengaged, numb, but are seeking a sense of belonging. Through the power of propaganda, this particular movement not only provides people with feelings of belonging, but also with a sense of unity.[113] In particular, a sense of unity stems from racism, namely the need to identify "the other" in order to achieve national identity, suggesting that discrimination is not a vehicle to find the other, but the medium to find oneself. Totalitarian regimes are capable of alienating a selected scapegoat, and placing it into a state of exception. Understanding this principle is fundamental in knowing how to move forward.

Although societies of the Global North are not currently under totalitarian regimes, we are witnessing a revival of nationalist feelings. Legal violence, objectification and silencing to the

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[112] Oliver, 195.
[113] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1985), 165-70.

detriment of incoming communities are a daily occurrence. However, these are not incoming communities' issues, but are receiving communities' issues. DiAngelo states, "white racism is ultimately a white problem and the burden for interrupting it belongs to white people."[114] For this reason, it might be worthwhile to employ *Trojan Women* for public readings and performances as a catalyst to promote the art of listening and compassion among receiving communities. It might be instrumental in helping hosting countries recognize the ways in which they are harming and disempowering refugees. DiAngelo has noticed that people show themselves unable to face their own biases, and are more likely to see them and scrutinize them in other people.[115] Tragedy might create the distancing effect necessary to favor this kind of conversation. Goldhill points out that tragedy "takes cherished beliefs, splits them apart under pressure—puts nothing back in their place. It lets you see the cracks in the edifice of social life."[116] *Trojan Women* allows the audience to engage with the self, shift perspective multiple times, and unravel complex social dynamics without the emotional connection to current political events. Tragedies act as a mirror of society: their role is to show and reveal, never to provide a solution. In Doerries' own words "If these ancient tragedies can teach us anything today, it's how to listen to one another without judging, how to grow from our experiences and mistakes, and how to heal as one community."[117]

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[114] DiAngelo, 66.
[115] DiAngelo, 61.
[116] Goldhill, 144.
[117] Bryan Doerries, *Theater of War: What Ancient Tragedies Can Teach Us Today* (New York: Vintage Books, 2015), 258.

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